



National Marine Fishery Service  
501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200  
Long Beach CA 90802



Bureau of Reclamation  
Fish and Wildlife Service  
2800 Cottage Way  
Sacramento CA 95825-1898



Environmental Protection Agency  
75 Hawthorne Street  
San Francisco CA 94105

# PRESS RELEASE

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## Federal and State Agencies Announce Bay-Delta Protection Plan

Jointly released by the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Contact: . Jeff McCracken  
Bureau of Reclamation  
916/978-4919

Bill Glenn  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
415/744-1589

David Klinger  
Fish and Wildlife Service  
503/231-6121

Scott Smullen  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
301/713-2370

(Sacramento) The federal government and the State of California have signed an agreement today on a comprehensive, coordinated package of actions to protect the San Francisco Bay and Delta while strengthening the state's long-term economic health. Business leaders, state officials and agricultural, urban, and environmental interests joined federal officials in endorsing the package of actions, which is designed to restore and protect the aquatic ecosystem of the San Francisco Bay and Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta while minimizing effects on agricultural and urban uses of the fresh water flowing into the estuary.

"This is a comprehensive, ecosystem approach to protecting the Bay and Delta and will bring long-term benefits for California's environment and economy," said Betsy Rieke, Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Interior. "Integrating federal environmental standards into an approach that works both now and in the future will be at the core of our continuing cooperative work with the State of California."

Federal officials said the process leading up to today's announcement could be considered a model for solving complex resource management issues. They said they sought out the input of many divergent interests in order to craft an agreement which addressed as many needs as possible.

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"Today we have reached consensus on common-sense approaches to issues that have gridlocked water policy for more than a decade," said Felicia Marcus, U.S. EPA regional administrator. "Urban, agricultural, and environmental interests all demonstrated courage and vision in looking beyond past disputes to find solutions that will benefit all Californians and their communities."

"The standards agreed to today are important and necessary steps toward securing long-term resources. There's still work to be done, but this sets the stage for cooperation among interests rather than the conflict that has characterized this issue for so long," said John Krautkraemer, lead attorney for the Environmental Defense Fund.

Today's actions are the result of intensive state and federal collaboration to improve the Bay/Delta environment while providing more certainty in water supplies. Federal agencies participating in the announcement were the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Fish and Wildlife Service. Participating state agencies include the California Resources Agency, the Department of Water Resources, the Department of Fish and Game, the California Environmental Protection Agency, and the State Water Resources Control Board.

Over the last year, the California Business Roundtable, the Bay Area Economic Forum, and other state business leaders have urged that standards be set this year to end the uncertainty in water supplies that could threaten California's economic recovery. "I want to congratulate all involved parties for reaching this unprecedented agreement," said Richard Rosenberg, Chairman and CEO of Bank of America and Chair of the Water Taskforce of the California Business Roundtable. "It demonstrates that water supply in California can be managed in the best interests of both the economy and the environment."

"We at Metropolitan are pleased to have participated in this historic process that hopefully will end years of acrimonious debate over fragile environmental resources of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta estuary," said John Wodraska, General Manager of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. "The agreement announced today will not only establish environmental protection for the Bay-Delta, but also will provide a much needed degree of certainty over water supply for 20 million Californians and the state's \$750 billion economy."

Foremost among today's actions are final water quality standards for the Bay/Delta issued by the U.S. EPA under the Clean Water Act. The standards are made up of four parts: 1) salinity criteria in Suisun Bay, which is the nursery of the estuary and where fresh and salt water meet; 2) survival targets for young migrating chinook salmon; 3) salinity criteria to protect fish spawning grounds on the lower San Joaquin River; and 4) descriptive criteria for maintaining the Suisun Marsh tidal wetlands. In tandem with the issuance of federal standards, the California Water Resources Control Board proposed a set of state standards that would take their place.

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Also included in the plan is the Fish and Wildlife Service's final designation of critical habitat for the delta smelt which is listed as a threatened species. In addition, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Fish and Wildlife Service outlined water requirements under the Central Valley Project Improvement Act. The biological opinion on effects of water projects' operation on the delta smelt will be finalized February 15, 1995. The opinion will contain recommendations on flows through the estuary that will ensure appropriate habitat for delta smelt and transport flows for juvenile fish. The biological opinion on the winter-run chinook salmon remains unchanged from the February 1993 long-term biological opinion.

A comprehensive, ecosystem approach to solving issues in the Bay/Delta--one that integrates the Endangered Species Act--will be the core of continued cooperation among various state and federal agencies and other entities. Beginning in 1995, the State Water Project and the federal Central Valley Project will begin operations to meet Delta needs. Then in March 1995, the State of California will develop a water quality control plan that meets both federal and state requirements. When U.S. EPA has approved the state's plan, the U.S. EPA will initiate a process to withdraw the federal standards.

A critical step to reach today's action was the input from the California Urban Water Agencies and representatives of the agricultural and environmental communities. A principal consideration on the part of all the interests affected by Bay/Delta actions is the quantity of water needed to meet environmental needs. A key goal was to meet regulatory requirements with the minimum amount of water and the maximum flexibility to make the integrated plan workable. To comply with the integrated regulatory actions, a total of about 400,000 acre-feet of water will be required in a normal water year, and about 1.1 million acre-feet in extreme drought conditions.

As part of the accord reached today, the water user community has agreed to fund \$10 million annually for 3 years to help pay for other causes of fishery decline such as those associated with unscreened pumps. "This is an exciting beginning to setting up a foundation for dealing with all our water supply issues," said Dan Nelson, Manager, San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority. We still face difficulties with the resources, and we're hopeful that addressing critical Bay/Delta problems will be the first step in solving overall water supply problems."

In the months and years to come, state and federal agencies will focus, in a coordinated way, on a process of improving coordination of water operations to meeting endangered species needs as well as the development of long-term solutions. The public will continue to have a central role in development of a long-term strategy. A committee of citizen advisors, representing urban, agricultural, environmental, community, and other affected interests will be created.

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**Please note:** The final Bay/Delta water quality standards will soon be available on the Internet, along with other U.S. EPA information that is already accessible. Go to the U.S. EPA Gopher at [gopher.epa.gov](http://gopher.epa.gov) and select the following sequence of directory options: EPA Offices and Regions, Region 9, Water Programs, Bay Delta Water Quality Standards. For questions about using the Internet to access the water quality standards, please call Kevin Wolf at "Water Online" 916/758-4211.

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